



Center for the Healing of Racism

Internalize Oneness

JAN - JULY 2026



Message from Center's Executive Director

A look back at workshops, films and recognition of the Center's history

HAPPY 250 BIRTHDAY USA



The year 2026 marks a significant milestone in American history as the nation celebrates its 250th anniversary. Across the United States, communities came together to commemorate this momentous occasion, reflecting on the past, celebrating the present, and envisioning the future.

The Center is also reflecting on our past. I felt that it is also a good time to revisit our history and share it with our followers. I wish we could include all of the programs over our 35-year history. Following are some of the highlights:

We must never forget

In the early summer of 1989, an ethnically diverse group of individuals began to meet together around the topic of racism, the role it played in their lives, and the pain they had suffered and witnessed.

The emphasis was on personal growth and healing, as well as finding ways to work proactively to eliminate racism and spread understanding of the principle it violates — the oneness of humanity.

Other people joined the group,



Cherry Steinwender
Executive Director

and members became involved in studying and equipping themselves with the knowledge and skills necessary to reach out to the wider community. Weekend workshops were sponsored. Dialogue: Racism was created and offered along with a host of other programs.

1994- The Rwandan Genocide, lasting only 100 days, was one of the most notorious modern genocides. During this 100-day period between April and July 1994, nearly one million ethnic Tutsi and moderate Hutu were killed as the international community and UN peacekeepers stood by. The Center felt we needed

to create a dialogue to aid people in understand what happened and why. The film, *Hotel Rwanda* was released, and not enough information was given in the movie.

1994—2020 - “Healing Racism” class for high school seniors: One of the most important projects we created began in 1994 and lasted for 26 years. We were asked to aid in creating a high school senior one-semester course based on Dialogue: Racism at St. Agnes Academy girl’s school (and open to seniors at Strake Jesuit High School boy’s school). For 26 years, we were involved in the schools every semester, except for two. We trained all four female and one male teacher to teach the class. The course was listed in the school’s curriculum as “Healing Racism.” Later, St. Thomas Catholic Boys’ School asked us to aid them in creating a class focused on racism as well.

1995- O.J. Simpson was acquitted on two counts of first-degree murder in the killings of Nicole Brown and Ron Goldman. The Center knew it was important to hold Dialogues to give people in Houston a chance to talk about the strong feelings related

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to the verdict. The need for a safe space was very necessary. I remember one person saying, "when we were on our job we were told not to talk about what we were hearing in the news."

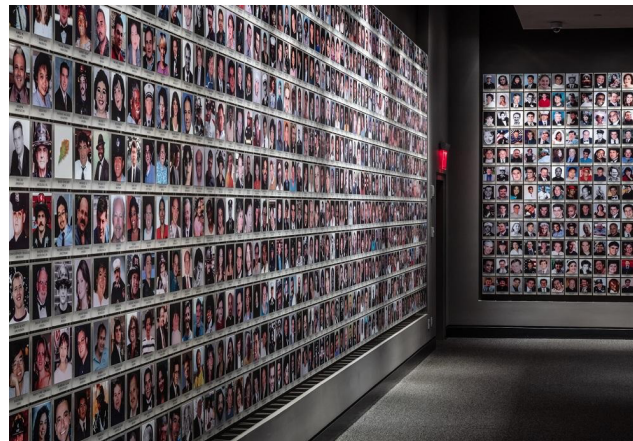
1996 - "Opening the Bread Basket" workshop was born to present to elementary school students. After 10 years working at the high school level, it was time to create workshops for younger children. This workshop allowed children to not only learn about bread that is eaten globally but to sample each of the breads that was brought into the classroom. Cherry wrote a children's book to keep the lesson alive. Bread was a symbol of commonality and is relective of differences. The book is titled "Bread Is A Simple Food, Teaching Children About Cultures."

1998 - James Byrd Jr. was murdered by three men, two of whom were avowed white supremacists, in Jasper, Texas. After hearing about this lynching behind a pickup truck, we sprang into action, doing what we do best — giving people a voice to talk about another act of violence. We were also invited to lead several workshops with Mr. Byrd's family. Several of us visited the family at their home in Jasper.

A memorial for Mr. Byrd was built in front of his home and included one of the Center's T-shirts.

On the 10th anniversary of his death, his sisters came to our office for help, to create a program to draw renewed attention to the death of their brother.

The workshop created for Mr.



A photo memorial honors the 2,977 people killed in the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attack

Byrd was titled "From Trees to Trucks, A history of Lynching." By that time, his story had largely faded from public memory.

2001 - (9-11) The World Trade Center towers are attacked. We presented workshops on five Houston Community College campuses, giving young adults a chance to talk about what happened. We met with at least 500 students. Only 20 students raised their hands when asked whether they had friends in their lives who were Hindus, Sikhs, Muslims, or Buddhists —people they spent time with, sat around the kitchen table with, or joined in celebrating births, marriages, and deaths. How can we understand the events surrounding 911 if our circle of acquaintances is limited to people who are just like us?

"South Asian Americans Leading Together" (SAALT) was a South Asian Americans civil rights organization focused on immigrant rights and racial justice. Headquartered near Washington, D.C.,

SAALT became a key policy group and a hub for South Asian organizations across the United States in the years after 911. We saw the importance of this organization and wanted to incorporate their work into our dialogue groups. We wanted to present the work of SAALT accurately, so we invited the CEO of

SAALT and one of its members to Houston to assist with dialogues. Our objective was to manage respectful dialogues at a time hate crimes were becoming out of control.

2003- The directors of the film, *Lost Boys of Sudan*, Megan Mylan and Jon Shenk, contacted the Center to ask for help in showing the film in Houston. We had a chance to work with them to find venues to show the film. Several members of the Center met a few of the young men, some of whom and a few of them were in the film. The Center facilitated a discussion of the film after each showing.

Lost Boys of Sudan is an Emmy-nominated feature-length documentary that follows two Sudanese refugees on an extraordinary journey from Africa to America. Orphaned as young boys in one of Africa's cruelest civil wars, Peter Dut and Santino Chuor survived lion attacks and militia gunfire to reach a refugee camp in Kenya along with thousands of other children. From there, remarkably, they were chosen to come to America. Safe at last from physical

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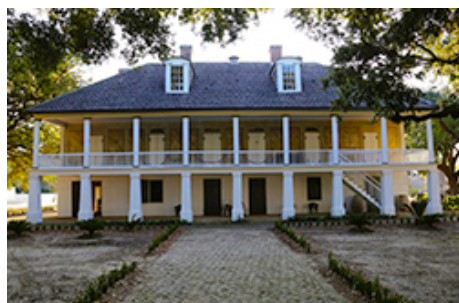
A look back at workshops, films and recognition of the Center's history

danger and hunger, a world away from home, they found themselves confronted with the abundance and alienation of contemporary American suburbia. An extensive national outreach campaign has brought *Lost Boys of Sudan* to thousands of community settings to build awareness and support for refugees and the crisis in Darfur, Sudan. I felt such a feeling of joy for us to be chosen to be a part of their life.

2015-2021- The Warren Fellowships program at the Holocaust Museum in Houston: For six years the Center was called upon to aid in providing supplemental workshops for future teachers across America.

The Warren Fellowship for Future Teachers, funded by a generous gift from the Naomi and Martin Warren Family Foundation in Houston, Texas, is developing a corps of pre-service educators who want to learn more about the Holocaust and how to effectively teach about it in their classrooms. The Fellowship was created in 2003 and has more than 400 alumni. The Warren Fellowship's main objective is to provide new teachers with the

necessary historical and pedagogical tools for teaching the Holocaust from the onset of their teaching careers.



Whitney Plantation

2017-2023 - Dialogue on the Plantation: The Center took a bus load of people several times to visit three plantations in Louisiana to learn firsthand what life was really like for people enslaved in America. The plantations we visited were:

Laura Plantation, in Vacherie, LA, a Creole Plantation. Creole life in Louisiana exhibited a unique, characteristic thread: The understanding that the family operated as a business and the business was family.

St. Joseph Plantation in Vacherie, LA, a working sugar cane plantation east of New Orleans. Oprah Winfrey's hit TV drama *Queen Sugar* was filmed there.

Whitney Plantation in Wallace, LA, is a genuine landmark built by enslaved Africans and their descendants. As a site of memory and consciousness, the Whitney Plantation Museum is meant to pay homage to all Africans enslaved on the plantation itself and to all of those who lived elsewhere in the American South. Whitney Plantation is one of the few plantations to focus only on the enslaved people who were forced to

work there and not on its opulence. After the tour, we moved to the picnic area to review our trip and dialogue about the history we learned before returning home.

2020- The death of George Floyd, became a pivotal moment in the movement against racial injustice and police brutality in the United States. Captured on video by bystanders, the incident showed Floyd pinned to the ground by Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin, who knelt on Floyd's neck for over nine minutes while Floyd repeatedly stated, "I can't breathe." This distressing footage sparked widespread protests across the nation and globally, highlighting issues of systemic racism and the excessive use of force by law enforcement. In Houston, we joined hands and hearts with 60,000+ people in front of City Hall. The first five years after his death we held programs designed for us to never forget he lived.

The death of George Floyd gave the Center another opportunity to assist in giving people a voice to have a dialogue around another tragedy.

2020- COVID19 kept people isolated and limited our opportunities to gather in person. To continue our work, we adapted to Zoom and launched a series of lunch-and-learn sessions called "Racism in..." exploring topics such as

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Vision Statement

Our vision is to build One America in the 21st century by connecting people through education and dialogue in a diverse world.

Core Beliefs

The human race is essentially one and racism is a learned behavior that can be unlearned.

Mission Statement

Our Mission is to facilitate the healing of racism through education and dialogue in a safe and supportive environment, in order to empower individuals and transform communities.

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racism in health care, camping, and other areas of daily life.

2020 - 2021 -

Univision

Television invited the Center to create

new programs for television to advance racial equity and social justice here in Houston. The projects/programs began December 2020 and ran through 2021. They addressed the systemic inequalities that have long impacted BIPOC (Black, Indigenous and People of Color) communities through community organizing, mobilizing, education and other actions.



2022- "Out of Bounds Conversations" workshop hosted

by "The People's Gathering" and facilitated by members of the Center was held on a golf course in Tacoma, Washington. In this full-day workshop occurring concurrently with Non-Golfers & Golfers in a foursome round of golf. Participants were challenged to learn that racism is significantly more than individual acts of meanness. The participants explored 1) how to think critically about their own experience with racism in the world around them by 2) identifying various forms of racism, and 3) reflecting on personal feelings during this dialogue.

AS WE WISH this nation HAPPY BIRTHDAY, it is our hope that the role we played within America will be remembered as well. At a time in history when the people of our

nation are feeling the pain of division and, at the same time, looking to the future with hope, so too the Center for the Healing of Racism is forward looking and filled with hope.

During the recent dedication of the new Obama Center in Chicago, both President Barack Obama and Michelle Obama called on each of us not to despair, but to involve ourselves in overcoming and changing the things that have caused despair. This is the work of the Center: bringing love, light, and hope — one heart at a time.

We must also remember all of the people that gave their hearts, bodies and souls to keeping the Center alive. As we look back we must also think of those no longer with us.

—Cherry Steinwender

Participation allows student to better understand Juneteenth

Juneteenth is a celebration of the freedom of enslaved African Americans that was announced in Galveston, Texas, two years after the Emancipation Proclamation was passed. It is a celebration of Black freedom that is yet to be fully acknowledged and respected by non-Black Americans.

While anyone can celebrate with African-Americans, it must be done with respect for personal rights, the dignity of Black Americans and Black history, and also by choosing to learn outside of academics. The event was about much more than just being an intern; it was about being part of a community that chooses to listen and feel together.

Being present and listening to Dr. Lecresha A. Peters speak in her keynote address about the correlation of psychological effects and physiological symptoms was a delicious treat of reassurance. It is a relief to hear a physician observe and emphasize that the psychological aspects of racism do affect Black Americans, regardless of their economic status.

Attending the Juneteenth event was a privilege granted by the University of Houston-Downtown; and Mrs. Steinwender offers it as an opportunity for psychology students to learn the dynamics between racism and mental health.

Although the CFHR is an educational center, it teaches us as psychology interns the value of learning about racism

and how, as future therapists, we can apply this knowledge in our practice.

Participating in this organization has allowed me to really understand the importance and impact Juneteenth has on different people. I was able to observe behind the scenes of organizing this event and to make sure everything runs smoothly. This event was a powerful but meaningful event by seeing different people come together to celebrate a special day.

There were speeches given during the event, and each person spoke about individual personal experiences being involved in this organization and how they want to make a better change for their community. All the people present there seemed to have a similar goal of wanting to change a person's perspective on race and to make an impact on the future.

It was an eye opening experience to see so many unique people come together and to talk and show support for the Juneteenth event and to the Center. Being able to intern and be a part of something much bigger than myself allowed me to feel safe in a community where I was new but still felt welcomed. I felt grateful to participate and intern in such an organization.

— Katherine Ramos

Rice students select Center for course work

Our names are Alex Breazeale, Anna Lee, Eli Risinger, and Elise Shu. We are students in Dr. Chase Lesane-Brown's Multicultural Psychology course at Rice University.

Despite having different careers of study ranging from psychology to business management and political science, we met in this class through a shared desire to learn more about how identities like race, gender, ethnicity, culture, and socioeconomic status contribute to human development.

As part of our course, students must take on a Service Learning Project with a community partner organization. For our project, we chose to partner with Cherry Steinwender and the Center for the Healing of Racism.

From the moment Cherry shared her work with our class and the work of the Center, the four of us immediately knew whom we wanted to work with. Cherry's passion and dedication for her work radiated from her as she spoke, and the way she talked about the mission of healing from the wounds of racism made us want to learn more.

MANY OF YOU ARE likely familiar with the Center's Dialogue: Racism event. Out of the four of us, Eli was the only one fortunate enough to have been able to attend it. Below is a reflection from Eli's time participating in it:

"Participating in Dialogue: Racism was one of the most meaningful parts of my experience with the Center. Across the dialogue's two sessions, I had the opportunity to listen to people from different backgrounds share personal stories about race, identity, and belonging.

Hearing participants speak so openly about their experiences with discrimination, immigration, privilege

and structural inequality pushed me to think differently about how racism operates, not just through individual actions, but through institutions, culture, and everyday conversations.

The experience also challenged me to reflect on aspects of my own upbringing that I had never questioned before.

Viewing the film, *Ethnic Notions*, and engaging in conversations about race forced me to confront how certain beliefs, ways of life, and narratives can become normalized without realizing their harm. I left the experience understanding that growth requires acknowledgment, accountability, self-reflection, and a willingness to be uncomfortable in order to become a fighter for all."

WHILE THE OTHER three of us were unable to attend Dialogue: Racism, Cherry presented us with an idea for a workshop titled, "Bamboozled." In this workshop, the three of us would be leading a discussion on times when people were "bamboozled" throughout history. In other words, times when a group of people were "deceived or gotten the better of by trickery, flattery, or the like—humbugged; hoodwinked." We immediately fell in love with Cherry's idea, and we set out to research different bamboozles throughout history.

For Alex's bamboozle, he chose to talk about the Tuskegee Syphilis Study. It was a 40-year-old project run in the mid 1900s by the CDC and the U.S. Public Health Services Department that did research on the effects of syphilis left untreated. The study population was a group of approximately 400 black men in Tuskegee, Alabama.

The bamboozle was that no participants were told about the

Syphilis Study. As a researcher myself, I've become very familiar with the ethical guidelines and the purpose of the Institutional Review Board and its role in promoting ethical, safe, and productive research. As someone who has known this process throughout his academic career, it was shocking to realize how recently this disturbing piece of research history took place.

As researchers, we are responsible for educating ourselves on the sometimes uncomfortable history of research here in the U.S. We can then acknowledge and respect those who came before us whose struggle and maltreatment led to the guidelines we have today. We need to use this knowledge to ensure that abuse like this never happens again.

For Anna's bamboozle, she chose to speak about the "Myth That Sounds Like a Compliment," also known as the "Model Minority Myth." Below are a few words from Anna:

"The model minority myth is an idea that portrays certain minorities (specifically, Asian Americans) as "model" citizens who are naturally hardworking, successful, don't struggle, and can overcome systemic barriers by working hard. On the surface, this may sound like a compliment, but its roots and usage have created a lot of damage.

THE NOTION WAS popularized in 1966 through white media narratives that served a political purpose during the Civil Rights Movement. As Black Americans were protesting segregation, police brutality, and systemic inequality, white society was saying, "Look at this other group who made it without protesting and without challenging

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Rice students select Center for course work

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the system. If they can do it, why can't you?" That's where we see the bamboozle.

Asian American success stories were weaponized against other minority groups to diminish the recognition of systemic oppression. The myth reframed systemic inequality as an individual failure, shifting the spotlight onto personal responsibility.

Today, Asian Americans are still seen through this lens of being "successful," "quiet," and "resilient." Their real struggles go unseen, making it harder to ask for help and easier for others to dismiss their need for help. Moreover, the idea makes it seem as though any difficulty is a personal failure of the disadvantaged, instead of something shaped by larger systems.

I chose to write about this bamboozle because I have experienced it throughout my own life as an Asian American. I have always felt that my experiences with racism have been minimized because Asians succeed in education. As a result, the impact of comments that seem like "compliments" are often left unrecognized or not taken seriously, sustaining the harmful impacts of racism through covert means."

For Elise's experience, she chose to speak about the "Myth of Meritocracy in Higher Education."

She focused on how success in

academic spaces is often framed as purely a matter of hard work and talent, while ignoring the structural advantages that shape opportunity

long before students reach college. Here is Elise's story about her experience:

"I chose this bamboozle because I have seen it play out in real time. At places like Rice University, it is easy to believe that everyone is there because they earned admission in the same way. But over time, I began noticing just how different everyone's foundation really is. The amount of access to higher-quality schooling, mentorship, financial stability, and even knowledge of how to navigate educational spaces shapes outcomes in ways that are not always visible.

The popular narrative of meritocracy makes it seem as if success is purely individual, when in reality it is shaped by layers of opportunity that build over time.

In fact, research shows that students from the highest-income families are significantly over-represented at elite universities, underscoring how access to resources shapes outcomes long before the admissions process. The popular narrative of meritocracy makes it seem as if success is purely individual, when in reality it is shaped by layers of opportunity that build over time.

What stood out to me most is how convincing this narrative is. It feels fair, and that is why it is so easy to accept. But once I started questioning it, I realized how much the system hides it. The narrative of

meritocracy shifts attention away from the institution and toward individuals, making inequality harder to see and easier to justify. This experience pushed me to think more critically about what is presented as neutral or objective, especially in academic environments that I used to see as purely merit-based.

Another of my biggest takeaways is the importance of continuing to question what we are told.

We can only be misled if we accept things without thinking about where they come from or whom they benefit. Personally, hearing from those at the Bamboozled event reinforced the idea of being a lifelong learner, not just in the classroom but in how we approach and understand the world around us. It is not about rejecting everything, but about staying curious and being willing to challenge assumptions, even in spaces that seem the fairest."

.....

We would like to give an enormous thank you to Cherry and all the staff at the Center for the Healing of Racism for granting us the opportunity to learn alongside all of you and share our own experiences. We feel greatly privileged to have been able to contribute to the Center's work and push our own boundaries. This project has taught us so much about effective dialogue, and we're looking forward to bringing these experiences with us into the future that awaits. Thank you, Cherry!



From left, Cherry and Center members Barbara Hacker and Joyce Steensrud

Three Amigos honored at Juneteenth Luncheon

The legacy of Houston's beloved "Three Amigos" brought the community together on June 20 as the Center for the Healing of Racism celebrated its 33rd Annual Juneteenth Ally Awards Barbecue Luncheon at St. Paul's United Methodist Church.

The gathering came at a poignant moment. Just days earlier, a video of two Muslim sisters being confronted and intimidated inside a Houston-area H-E-B store spread widely online, prompting conversations about prejudice, belonging, and the importance of standing together across differences. The incident served as a powerful reminder that the Center's mission of healing racism and building understanding remains as vital today as it was when the organization was founded.

People of many faiths gathered as the Center posthumously honored Archbishop Joseph A. Fiorenza, Rabbi Samuel E. Karff, and Rev. William A. Lawson for more than five decades of leadership advancing civil rights, racial healing, and interfaith cooperation in Houston. Marjorie "MJ" Joseph also received an Ally Award in recognition of her leadership with the Houston Coalition Against Hate and her work to foster belonging throughout the community.

"This is an award that we have presented to people across the United States," said Executive Director Cherry Steinwender. "We recognize people who have given their all in the pursuit of ending racism, advancing justice, and connecting people to one another."

For more than three decades, the Ally Awards have recognized individuals and organizations whose work builds bridges across race,



Juneteenth Ally Award Barbecue Luncheon
Theme: Health Is Wealth
Presented by The Center for the Healing of Racism

June 20, 2026
Time: 11:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

ALLY AWARD RECIPIENTS:
"THE THREE AMIGOS OF HOUSTON"


RABBI SAMUEL KARFF


ARCHBISHOP JOSEPH FIORENZA


REV. WILLIAM "BILL" LAWSON


AND MARJORIE JOSEPH (M.J.)
MANAGING DIRECTOR OF BLD POWER (BUILD POWER)

GUEST SPEAKER: DR. LECRESHA A. PETERS, M.D.

Location:
St. Paul's United Methodist Church
Fondren Hall
5501 Main St.
Houston, TX 77004

TICKET SALES:
*SPONSORSHIP LEVEL- ALLY \$2500
(1 TABLE, 7 SEATS)
ACTIVIST \$100 (RESERVED SEAT)
FUTURE LEADER (STUDENT) \$75
SENIOR (60+) \$75

*For Sponsorship tickets, call 713-520-8226 or
email info@centerhealingracism.org

LINK TO REGISTER: [HTTPS://WWW.CENTERHEALINGRACISM.ORG/EVENT-CALENDAR/](https://www.centerhealingracism.org/event-calendar/)



Juneteenth Ally Award flyer announced 2026 luncheon

faith, and culture. Each year, the luncheon transforms a room of strangers into a community as guests share a meal, exchange their stories, and discover that healing begins with conversation.

The luncheon featured keynote speaker Dr. LeCresha Peters, whose address, *Health Is Wealth*, explored the connection between health, equity, and community well-being.

She emphasized that healthy

communities are built through trust, inclusion, and meaningful relationships.

Accepting the award on behalf of the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston, Father Reginald Samuels reflected on Archbishop Fiorenza's enduring influence.

"We are all called to move forward in the life God has given us in this world," Samuels said. "I am so thankful that he is being honored again today."

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Three Amigos honored at Juneteenth Luncheon

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Family members and friends accepted the awards on behalf of the Three Amigos, reminding attendees that their work remains unfinished. Cheryl Lawson, daughter of Rev. Bill Lawson, challenged the audience to continue confronting racism and division with the same courage and determination her father demonstrated throughout his life.

Rabbi Shaul Osadchey, accepting on behalf of Rabbi Karff, encouraged participants to build authentic relationships across differences.

"These relationships that we build are significant," he said. "When we increase our religious literacy and our

racial literacy, we have the opportunity to know each other as people. We need to celebrate our diversity, not be afraid of it, but embrace it."

The program also featured inspiring remarks from a youth oratory winner and reflections on the Center's ongoing work to create a more just and connected Houston. Former Ally Award recipient Linda Wallace served as emcee.

As the luncheon concluded, one message resonated throughout the room: the example set by the Three Amigos is not simply part of Houston's history—it is a blueprint for its future.

At a time when acts of intolerance can spread across social media in minutes, the Center for the Healing of Racism continues to offer something equally powerful: a place where people can come together to listen, learn, build relationships, and replace fear with understanding.

Thirty-three years after the first Ally Awards luncheon, the Center's mission remains unchanged. In a city as diverse as Houston, the work of healing racism is not only about remembering the past—it is about building the relationships that will shape a stronger, more united future.

Melody Daniels contributed to this article.

Two students' summer internships at the Center

As an eight-year-old student, I was introduced to environmentalism through my science class elective, igniting my passion for humanitarian causes.

It was an instinct to recognize that we all have inherent value as human beings, like how nature has value in having life.

In high school, psychology seemed like an interesting subject to pick up, but I did not have the opportunity to enroll in the AP Psychology class. In my very first semester of community college, I decided to take the required introductory psychology class and immediately knew that my calling was to become a therapist.

A few things got in the way. However, I decided to return to school and complete my Bachelor of Science in Psychology degree and pursue graduate school to become a Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC). Now, as a student at the University of Houston-Downtown during Donald Trump's second presidency, I decided that my summer internship would be at the Center for the Healing of Racism (CFHR) with Cherry Steinwender.

As Critical Race Theory (CRT) is restricted and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) is banned by Texas Senate Bill 17, I, as a future mental health therapist, must learn, practice, and apply this knowledge, which is crucial for many future clients and people globally.

—*Katherine Ramos*

Psychology is a subject that has always fascinated me because I am intrigued by how the human brain functions and want to understand the mystery behind mental health. Many factors can influence human behavior, and it is interesting to find out.

I did not initially want to pursue psychology as my main major, but learning and observing through the media and coursework how it plays an important role in today's society made me passionate about making an impact in the future.

I have personally seen the toll that mental health can take on a person's routine and lead to far worse. From that moment, I knew I wanted to make a change, especially in children and the Latin culture. I want to raise awareness in my community by taking psychology more seriously. I am pursuing my Bachelor of Science in Psychology at the University of Houston-Downtown.

As I approach my final semester, I have decided to take my internship during the summer course at the Center for the Healing of Racism. I chose this internship because I wanted to learn the importance and impact race can have on a person's psychological health. Racism can be seen as a disease of ignorance by the Center yet, getting sick is not our fault, but getting well is our responsibility. Working with Mrs. Cherry Steinwender, the Executive Director of this organization, has taught me how race and psychology intersect. This knowledge will positively impact my educational journey and my professional career.

—*Dayanara C.*

Slow introduction to racism for student intern

Racism is a topic that is often avoided when interacting with others because it can be awkward. Racism can be defined as a belief or attitude that affects how a person is treated and judged because of their skin color or ethnic background. It is a negative mindset that a person believes their race or ethnic background is superior to that of another race.

THIS MENTALITY has existed throughout history and persists today. This way of thinking has affected individuals, communities, and society, causing division. This term and way of thinking can be passed down through generations, but educating people about this can change a person's perspective.

Understanding how racism develops and can influence society's mindset to make an impact to promote more fairness, respect, and equality among each other. Racism not only affects the economy and politics but can also affect a person's mental and emotional well-being.

AS AN INTERN at the Center for the Healing of Racism, who learns from Lee Mun-Wah's films and briefly about the code of conduct and ethics of mental health therapists, I recognize that the environment of the therapy session is crucial.

The job of the LPC is to be beyond listening, understanding, and diagnosing a client; there are also group therapies similar to the dialogues on racism workshops in the CFHR. The role of a professional mental health therapist is to acknowledge and communicate the ground rules and roles of each group member.

THE GROUND RULES must adhere to the following requirements: respect for people's rights and



dignity, privacy, confidentiality, and self-determination (American Psychological Association, 2017). Group therapy is needed in a contemporary society in which division and prejudice are thriving and encouraged as a more “authentic” outlook in comparison to activism and Woke Culture that have origins in the 1930s in African-American history.

Individual therapy not only benefits the oppressed but also the oppressor to wake up from the insidious institutionalized racism and systemic oppression. The historical societal framework of dehumanizing people due to race was created with the purpose of trickery through unconscious cognitive bias.

As a current university student majoring in psychology, oppressed people participating in activism and Woke Culture are expressing a natural response to systemic oppression and institutionalized racism. As a future LPC, it is important to accept the reality that many non-White Americans and other marginalized

groups face daily. By doing so, I actively respect people's personal rights and dignity in a professional and confidential environment, creating a safe space for reassurance in a society of gaslighting.

FURTHERMORE, individual therapy not only benefits the oppressed but also the oppressor to wake up from the insidious institutionalized racism and systemic oppression. The historical societal framework of dehumanizing people due to race was created with the purpose of trickery through unconscious cognitive bias.

As a therapist, respecting a client's personal rights and dignity looks like assisting the oppressor in acknowledging their shame and growing from it. The role of the therapist is to accept that integration can mentally and emotionally help both parties affected by racism.

ACCORDING TO Allport's Intergroup Contact Theory, it is achieved through everyday interactions with people who are of a different race or background. In a system where learning about Critical Race Theory is restricted and DEI is banned, waiting for the political powers to assist the public is not realistic; change will not bring communities together.

Professionals in mental health, reassuring clients, groups, and non-profit organizations like CFHR, are sustainable methods of building a community that is bringing change in a system that refuses to evolve.

Interning at the CFHR has enlightened us psychology students about the dynamic between racism and mental health and how crucial it is for us future LPCs to practice this information.

— Katherine Ramos

Center joins Rice University on rights trip

Cherry Steinwender, Executive Director of the Center for the Healing of Racism (CFHR), and Center facilitator, Dr. Christie Harrison accompanied 18 Rice University sociology students and five faculty members on a seven-day bus trip through Alabama between March 15 and 21. The group's itinerary retraced many of the historic sites of the U.S. Civil Rights Movement.

"Together with the students, we lifted a semester of study off the textbook page," said Harrison, noting that highlights of the trip included visits to the rebuilt walls and pews of Birmingham's 16th Avenue Church and "solemnly crossing the Edmond Pettus Bridge in Selma, on foot together in two-by-two rows, on a cold, damp March morning."

Following the bridge crossing, the group was joined by several of the foot soldiers who volunteered to recount their experiences as teenagers in Selma and Montgomery during the 1960s.

Historic sites in Montgomery "included the powerful Legacy Museum complex and the National Memorial for Peace and Justice dedicated to the recognition and remembrance of the brutal era of sanctioned lynching." The final sites of the tour were visited in Tuskegee,

"acknowledging the contributions of so many who advanced the cause of humanity and freedom."

The invitation came about in February 2026 when long-time CFHR member, Laura Gallier, introduced Cherry Steinwender to Rice University professor, Dr. Elizabeth Hordge-Freeman, Associate Professor of Sociology at Rice's Center for African & African American Studies.

"That led to a visit by Dr. Hordge-Freeman to the Center," said Harrison, "where she quickly recognized the Center's impact and legacy."

Trust quickly formed, and the Center was invited to be part of the faculty team guiding, supporting, and

encouraging the students on this transformational journey through history and personal learning."

Harrison noted that "every site, interview, and museum was carefully curated by Dr. Hordge-Freeman and her colleague, Abbey Godley, Assistant Dean for Student Programs and coordinator of experiential learning opportunities offered to Rice students."

While each of the students had studied in books throughout the semester, and some of the adults for

a lifetime, said Harrison, "coming face-to-face with these legacy sites brought tremendous emotions."

Steinwender's presence on the bus and at the sites — and what she added — was a huge bonus, as she was the only person on the trip who had lived through this historic era.

Together, Steinwender and Harrison led daily debriefings with students and staff, using the CFHR Dialogue Guidelines, to help the students and faculty process all they had taken in during each day.

"The students were rapt by Cherry's impromptu recollections and stories," Harrison said. "They repeatedly sought her counsel to learn more and also to reflect on their emotional journey," adding that the cohort of future leaders represented deeply bright, thoughtful, and diverse students.

Upon return, Steinwender and Harrison attended the final student project presentations and debriefings with students and staff.

"This is an annual Rice University experiential learning journey organized by Dr. Hordge-Freeman as part of her teaching curriculum," Harrison noted, adding that "The trip was documented by professional videographers, and excerpts can be viewed on various social media platforms."

https://www.instagram.com/p/DW4bslrEZ4W/?img_index=1&igsh=MWJ1Nnh4bmVuOGI3ZA



Internalize Oneness

Question Bridge: Black Males interview

[The Question Bridge: Black Males](#) project is a platform for Black men of all ages and backgrounds to ask and respond to questions about life in America.

It was created to stimulate connections and understanding among Black men, but also to show the diversity of thought, character and identity in the Black male population so rarely seen in American media.

In essence, it seeks to represent and redefine Black male identity in America.

Question Bridge: Black Males was created by Chris Johnson and Hank Willis Thomas, Bayeté Ross Smith and Kamal Sinclair. The executive producers are Delroy Lindo, Deborah Willis and Jesse Williams.

The Center for the Healing of Racism's Executive Director, Cherry Steinwender, was asked to be interviewed for the project. The rules she was given: think of 2-3 questions you have for fellow Americans, next, answer four to five questions from others who have participated in this project. The interview took place at the Rothko Chapel in Houston, Texas.

The questions Mrs. Steinwender asked our fellow Americans are below and I (Katherine Ramos) felt a need to answer them as well.

1) Can a nation celebrate how far it has come while still being honest about how far it has to go?

Many Americans believe that acknowledging the European-American history of the United States is the opposite of celebrating modern progress. This is far from the truth; both perspectives are the two faces of the same coin.

To feel the joy of celebrating the



progress of the United States society, accepting the hurtful history is the first step. In psychology, asking questions to understand the source of the pain is the first step in helping the client feel better and be mentally healthier.

For instance, in a scenario where a client is depressed, an LPC must find the source by making assessments with the client's consent.

Depending on those results, the LPC will create a plan in which the client confronts the pain and grows. This is what must also be done with the United States, with its dehumanizing history and evolution into a more but not fully humanitarian present. It is not about the celebration; it is about acknowledging the collective pain and allowing it to evolve into unified compassion.

2) What do we lose as a nation when we avoid teaching the difficult parts of our history?

We lose collective consciousness in humanizing every person's life. Awareness of a historical wound

brings attention to the pain and how the injury can be treated so it can heal. By avoiding the historical dehumanization, we create more wounds with each other and pass on generations of trauma.

The cycle keeps repeating because the lack of accountability enables the behavior to repeat. In allowing this pattern to repeat, as a nation, we lose the authentic joy that can only be celebrated through integration.

We currently participate in each other's cultural foods, entertainment, and similarities and differences. The line is drawn at each other's history because of the fear of addressing the pain that unfolds from generational shame. We miss out on unified respect that can evolve into unified joy in forms we cannot fathom because we did not believe it to be accessible.

3) What's not being said that needs to be said, and what is that silence costing us?

"Thank you for bringing this to my awareness. I may not fully understand your experience, but I want to sincerely try to" is what is not being said today. As politics aims to divide people in contemporary society, compassion for one another is fading away along with history.

Listening, the first step to understanding, is being traded for defensiveness. Gaslighting the oppressed people through institutionalized racism has become so unconsciously insidious that it fragments the collective humanity.

The silence of attempting to listen is the missing piece in healing because, for centuries, the pain has been communicated, and people get tired of trying to explain racism in

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Friends created Center after avoiding racism topic

Cherry Steinwender has spent nearly four decades creating spaces for honest dialogue about racism

For nearly four decades, Cherry Steinwender has dedicated her life to conversations many people spend their lives avoiding.

As founder and executive director of the Center for the Healing of Racism, Steinwender has led workshops across 48 states and internationally, helping thousands confront difficult questions about race, privilege and healing.

Yet the organization that has become a national model did not begin with strategic planning or nonprofit ambitions. It began around a kitchen table with a handful of friends who realized they knew remarkably little about one another's lived experiences.

"We were all good friends," Steinwender said. "We'd go out to lunch, we'd go out to dinner. But if anything came up on the news about racism, somebody would automatically say, 'Would you pass the salt, please?' We didn't want to talk about it."

For years, the group maintained close friendships while carefully avoiding conversations about race. That changed after one of Steinwender's closest friends asked Steinwender a question that would ultimately lay the foundation for the Center.

"She said, 'Cherry, why is it you've



Well-worn books and other items such as uniforms were handed down from white schools to black schools in segregated states

never felt safe enough to tell me what life really is like for you as a Black woman in the United States?"

More than three decades later, Steinwender still becomes emotional remembering that moment.

"That question... I can still feel it. It was almost like somebody stabbed me in the

chest," she said. "Because I wanted to pretend life for me was the same as it was for you. But I knew better."

Growing up in segregated Louisiana made those conversations painful to revisit.

Born in Opelousas and raised in Lake Charles before moving to Houston at 19, Steinwender experienced Jim Crow firsthand. She remembers sitting in the back of buses, using worn textbooks handed down from white

schools and watching children imprisoned for participating in Civil Rights demonstrations.

"I lived that," she said. "When you go to the Rosa Parks Museum and see her sitting in the back of the bus, I lived that. I said, 'I don't want to do nothing about no racism,'" Steinwender said with a laugh. "Been there, done that."

Looking back, she says that

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Question Bridge: Black Males interview

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different digestible forms. What we need today is acknowledgement, listening ears, and curiosity for empathy. The silence of appreciation and understanding is costing people their health and lives.

The second part of the project Mrs.

Steinwender answered questions from fellow Americans who also participated on the screen.

AS INTERNS witnessing Mrs. Steinwender practicing her activism was an opportunity to learn about what dismantling racism looks like outside of a psychological setting.

The Center has served as a catalyst for the healing of racism through the education and empowerment of individuals since 1989. The education provided by the Center will aid in our career choice.

— **Katherine Ramos and Dayanara Cowo**

Visit Rosenwald School in West Columbia

Son of immigrant peddler built 5,367 schools in southern Black communities

“Give While You Live” was the philosophy of philanthropist Julius Rosenwald, the subject of a documentary film entitled, *Rosenwald*. It was presented on April 19, 2026 by the Center for the Healing of Racism and the Jewish Federation of Greater Houston.

Rosenwald’s other philosophy was inspired by the Jewish doctrine of *Tikun Olam* (“repairing the world”). I found this to be embodied by my fellow attendees, presenters Cherry Steinwender and Rabbi Shaul Osadchey, and the First Baptist Church of West Columbia, which provided the venue and the fellowship of lunch before the film.

AT MY TABLE were a distinguished Rabbi, a former Texas State Representative, and a professor emeritus of political science who is also the first African American President of the League of Women Voters.

Also at the table were young, enthusiastic movers and shakers in Houston’s social justice world and citizens like me who want to learn and make a difference in our communities. Over lunch we enjoyed lively conversation that went from world events to making homemade ice cream.

AFTER FELLOWSHIP, we gathered to watch the documentary. Julius Rosenwald rose from being the son of an immigrant peddler to president of Sears, Roebuck and Company and accumulating unforeseen wealth. After reading two books simultaneously, *Up From Slavery* and *An American Citizen*, his life’s trajectory changed.



Julius Rosenwald, 1929

— *Library of Congress*

He partnered with Booker T. Washington to build 5,367 schools in African American communities throughout the South. He also worked with Madame C.J. Walker to build YMCAs.

Through the Rosenwald Fund, fellowships were given to painters, sculptors, photographers, poets, writers, musicians, dancers, doctors, and historians. As Julian Bond stated in the film, funds were given to people who turned out to be the Who’s Who of Black America, Langston Hughes, Marian Anderson, James Baldwin, Gordon Parks, and Father of the Blood Bank, Dr. Charles R. Drew, among many others.

A Rosenwald fund loan aided in the creation of the Tuskegee Fliers who, after fighting fascism overseas in WWII, returned to fight racism and help spark the Civil Rights era.

The Rosenwald Fund contributed one-third of the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People) litigation costs aimed at school desegregation in *Brown v. Board of Education*.

Equally as fascinating was to learn about the Michigan Boulevard Garden Apartments (Rosenwald Garden) in Chicago.

THIS WAS ONE OF the best documentaries I’ve ever seen in terms of content, visuals, sound, and editing. The amount of history I was unaware of was almost too much to comprehend.

I felt a personal connection, considering my maternal grandfather had emigrated from Poland in 1918, and then worked as a mercantile clerk before owning his own store in Port Arthur, Texas.

Moreover, I recently discovered that a restored Rosenwald school exists in the small Louisiana town where my father (b.1920) grew up, and where I visited every summer for 18 years without ever hearing of the school’s existence.

AFTER THE FILM, we heard from the local residents who, through their vision and perseverance, made it possible for West Columbia to have our nation’s only fully-restored Rosenwald

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Friends created Center after avoiding racism topic

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response came from exhaustion rather than indifference. After living through segregation and witnessing racial violence throughout her childhood, she had no desire to reopen old wounds.

“Why would I want to do something about racism? I lived through it. I watched people getting beat down. I watched children being put in jail. Of course that’s pain.”

HER FRIEND REFUSED to let the idea die.

“Finally, just to get her off my back, I said, ‘Okay, I’ll do something about racism.’ I had no idea what that would look like.”

At first, it looked like nothing more than a few people gathering in one another’s homes.

“There was no intention of forming a nonprofit organization,” Steinwender said. “We were just sitting around each other’s kitchen tables talking about racism.”

Those conversations quickly became something much larger. Friends invited friends. Participants shared their experiences with neighbors and coworkers. Before

long, demand had outgrown the kitchen table.

“It’s as if this thing took on a life of its own,” she said. “We were trying to keep up with it.”

THAT UNEXPECTED momentum led to the creation of the Center for the Healing of Racism, an organization whose philosophy remains rooted in those first conversations.

Steinwender believes racism cannot be addressed through surface-level discussions about diversity. Instead, participants must first understand racism as a system before they can begin healing from it.

“I’m not healing from diversity,” she said. “I’m healing from racism.”

During the organization’s signature two-day “Dialogue: Racism” program, participants spend hours examining racism as a structural system, distinguishing it from prejudice and exploring concepts including white privilege, implicit bias, internalized oppression, institutional racism and environmental racism.

“If you don’t name the thing what it really is,” she said, “you ain’t never going to really do nothing about it.

I’ve had kids come from universities to do internships, and they’ll walk in and say, ‘I’ve never been hurt by racism,’ ” she said. “I’ll laugh and tell them, ‘That’s because you don’t know what it is.’ ”

Rather than judging participants for what they don’t know, Steinwender begins by helping them understand racism as a system rather than a series of isolated incidents. She believes many avoid conversations about racism not out of malice, but because they have never been given the tools or the space to examine it honestly.

“OUR FOUNDATION is set upon healing because we recognize everybody in this country has been damaged around racism,” she said. “Everybody. I don’t care how white you are or what shade of brown you are.”

That perspective has remained remarkably consistent over nearly four decades. Just as one friend once challenged her to confront truths she had spent years avoiding, Steinwender now spends her life creating spaces where others can do the same.

— Melody Daniels

Visit the Rosenwald School in West Columbia

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School. We walked down the block to tour the school and asked questions of docents, one who had been a Rosenwald student.

Out of 533 schools built in Texas, the Columbia school is only one of five remaining today. The school was being used as a hay barn, hidden from view but recognized by someone who

taught in a Rosenwald school in another town. It was acquired, moved, and renovated.

The school is now situated behind the Columbia Historical Museum, itself chock-full of Texas history and knowledgeable docents.

I came away from the event realizing the impact of one person stepping up with an idea, the importance of community, and the

fact that one doesn’t have to be a wealthy philanthropist to make a difference in our world. And I had a feeling of hope, because when we gather to talk and learn, we truly are one. I encourage all civic groups, churches, and schools to schedule a viewing of Rosenwald through The Center.

— Carol Wells

END
RACISM